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ABSTRACT

It is argued in this paper that teachers must develop an awareness of the historical implications of the black dialect. A sample in-class composition written in black dialect is quoted in its entirety and analyzed, and a personal writing approach is described. The first part of the approach deals with structure, and a linguistic method is used for teaching the form classes of noun, verb, adjective, and adverb. The second part of the approach is the cognitive framework for stages of development in concept formation, interpretation of data, and the application of principles. In the third part of this approach, students are sectioned into individualized groups of five in which they exchange themes and related materials, becoming critics of features and structures not yet overcome by fellow classmates. It is concluded that this approach allows students psychological freedom in usage and gives meaning to their cultural identity and cultural experiences. (TS)

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"A THREAT TO THE BLACK DIALECT: AN APPROACH THAT WORKS"

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" A THREAT TO THE BLACK DIALECT: AN APPROACH THAT WORKS"

In my effort to present to you the methods of this threat, I pledge not to be like the Cajun with a Ph.D. in English who said:

> "I ain't never made no mistake in English cept once, and when I knowed it, I tuck it back."

Ethnic linguistic diversity is beautiful and it is my desire to capture this beauty by offering a second dialect as a functional variety in the students' professional or social world.

Far too often, we as teachers have been perplexed or totally overwhelmed by the whole idea of how to disseminate theory into practice for teaching the basic problems of language in the classroom. Surely, most of you have been exposed to the methods of linguistics either by reading three to five books in the area, by taking formal courses or by pursuing a degree at one of three levels. Regardless, of these experiences, we find it necessary to seek more ways to solve by total elimination the frequent and sometimes systematic grammatical problems of our students in the written forms of the English language.

Before we can effectively approach these problems, we must question and later evaluate our feelings toward the features and structures to be corrected. We must ask whether we are going to be innovative, optimistic, understanding, patient or just indifferent toward the linguistic differences to be encountered. Therefore, if in fact you do use the linguistic approach, you will have considered, that is, in your profound opinions whether linguistic instruction is too theoretical to be practical; whether linguistics is useless to high school students and teachers; and whether in your effort to teach Standard English you are imposing a value judgement by insisting that the student learn to write in Standard English. As teachers of these skills,

we must have no doubts about the questions proposed. We must therefore possess "awareness:" "awareness" of the historical implications of the Black dialect, "awareness" of the relationship between language and culture, and an "awareness" of ethnic and environmental differences.

This total awareness establishes rapport between teacher and student at all ages and at all levels. This rapport allows the student to relax. He is free to communicate without fear of intimidation. To further motivate freedom in production, I have used as a basic method the personal writing approach. Students are encouraged to write from their cultural experiences. This, I have discovered allows for creativity in structure, a direct identity with what the student wants to say, and an unlimited development in content. This approach is step I in procedural development for all writing assignments.

In your recent years of exposure in linguistics, perhaps you have searched for methods and approaches to the existing persistent language problems only to find, such misconceptions for Black Dialect speakers as being non-verbal, having sloppy speech, having an inferior cognitive development, having lazy lips and lazy tongues, possessing poor auditory discrimination and many other so called non-standard English forms, all stigmatized as simplification of Standard English usage. Perhaps you also found particular features that are supposedly found only in Black speech, for example: you got your coat? a direct question without the structural marker--do or have as, "Do you have your coat or Have you gotten your coat?" These examples are structures that we expect in written Standard English to form questions. Since in this paper examples of other systematic features cannot be covered in detail, we will look at a few common features found in a college freshman's paper:

THESE ARE SOME OF WHAT PEOPLE RUN FROM TO RUN TO

Many people runs relity, trying to find peace and pleasure in their own defination of life, also, many people escape relity to accomplish many impossible thing that they never could complete in real life. As you know everybody have problems in some kind of way. People runs from something they did or someone that is close to them is doing wrong. My paper is about relations between parent and her child.

The person I am going to talk about; his name is David. He stay with his mother and his sister. His father lives not to far from him. For along time his mother and father been seperated for a along time. Lots his father comes over to visit him. Lots of time he doesn't get along with his sister. David just turn sixteen years old. But it happen during the age of fifteen years old. It only happen this year.

He is a type of person who thinks he is about eighteen or twenty years old. He always thinks he older then his sister.

David talks back to his mother and argues all the time at her. She tries to do thinks for him which is best for him, but he wanted everything and do anything he wants. He doesn't do anything around the house unless he is told. At times he still don't do what he told. When it is time for him to clean up, he half do it. He usually goes out and get high alot too. His mother found out about it. He was in trouble for that. He likes to bother people exspecially his sister. Him and his sister gets into a fight all the time. They argues and argues everyday. So they don't get along with each other. Everynight he comes in the house late. His mother told him to come in the house early, but he didn't paid any attention to her. He told his sister that "If mom touch me, I'm going to run away from home." One

night he was arguing at his mother. She raise her foot at him, but she didn't touch him. His mother went the back in her room. When she came back, he ran out the door over to his father house. He told what happen, that his mother kit him, so he ran out the house.

(This was an in-class Composition)

This paper has numerous features in absence of the 3rd person, absence of past tense, and incorrect subject and verb through false agreement and through hypercorrection.* Examples in the use of subject and verb for false agreement are:

	False Agreement	Hypercorrection
A. Subject and Verb		
1. People runs from something they did	X	X
2. Everybody have problems	X	
3. They argues and argues everyday	X	X
4. Many people runs	X	
B. Absence of Past tense		
1. David just turn sixteen years old		
2. He told what happen		
3. She raise her foot at him		
C. 3rd Person		
He stay with his mother and her sister		

*Errors in unity, coherence and basic structure are not considered in this analysis.

Although this student had in this paper at least two errors of each of these problems, there were examples in other sections of the paper where each grammatical feature was used correctly:

Subject verb and 3rd person

1. David talks back to his mother and argues all the time with her.
2. His father lives not too far from him.

The use of (ed)

. . . but he wanted everything

Evidence in this paper shows either a grammatical approximation of certain features or an intuitive use by experience. Whatever the choice, the student has been unsystematic in similar structures and needs open awareness to these errors by contrast, explanation and by instruction. In this particular situation many students in the class had similar and additional errors, so this approach was used:

Basic approach to structure

I. A linguistic method for teaching the form classes: Noun, Verb, Adjective, Adverb. Contrasted definitions were used with the traditional eight parts of speech to show why the linguistic method is more relevant in understanding language meaning and language structure.

The Adjective, Noun, and Verb are realized by inflection, so they are distinguishable by form rather than ambiguous meanings as used in traditional grammars. In form English has eight (8) inflections:[1]

The noun paradigm (2):

$[-Z_1]$, plural - s, as boys, cars
- es, as roses, boxes, etc.
(plural ending is determined by morphological environment of four allomorph distributions / - S,-Z, -iZ, - əN/)

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[1] H. A. Gleason, In Introduction to Descriptive Linguistics, Revised Edition (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1955), pp. 92-110.

[$-Z_2$], possessive as 's or s' meaning is significant here - The boy's hat was stolen.
- The boys' hats were stolen.

The verb paradigm (4):

[$-Z_3$], third person; example: he walks

[-ing] present participle; example: he is walking

[$-D_1$], past tense; example: he walked

[$-D_2$], past participle: he had walked

	Base	Base + (-ing)	Base + Z_3	Base + D_1	Base + D_2
Irregular	Sing	Singing	Sings	Song	Sung
Regular	Walk	Walking	Walks	Walked	Walked

The adjective paradigm (2):

[- er], equivalent to more for the comparative degree

[- est], equivalent to most for the superlative degree

The adverb paradigm:

[- ly], A category that is syntactic and is determined only by listing.

To further explain categories of the verb, one must note that all verbs have no more than five forms, however, some have only four (usually a regular verb). There is of course the so called "Black Verb - To Be." This unique verb is the only one of its kind in the language. Other regular and irregular verbs have four to five forms, "Be" has eight: am, is, are, was, were, be, being, and been. This inconsistenc to most irregular verbs of the language may be a salient point for looking at the problems it causes its users. The rule for this paradigm is a system all its own and students must be made aware through thorough training of its unusual structure and use of its varied functions. For the present use of the verb to be among speakers

of Black dialect, the meaning cannot be equated with the same use,meaning and structure of standard English speakers. Black speakers supply a use and meaning that is more related and closest to early West African Pidgin languages as a result of slave heritage, cultural identity, isolation of speech communities, and non-acculturation. Gullah or salt-water talk is a good example of retentive language features here in Mainland U.S.A. These speakers are found around the coastal sea islands of the Carolinas.

The second part of the approach is the cognitive framework for stages of development in these concepts. All principles are presented by the Taba Concept Attainment Model[2] where three approaches are used. First, Concept formation--a cognitive domain for identifying and enumerating data, grouping, and developing functional categories, that is, form classes, function words and functors.[3] Second is the interpretation of data--an understanding of how and where functions occur. This is all accomplished through examples, illustrations, and explanations; thirdly, the application of principles through tests, drills, discussions, and supportative organizational skills--in fact a feedback.

At this point students are grouped into individualized groups of five (5) where they exchange themes, related materials, etc. to become critics of features and structures not yet overcomed by fellow classmates. This is a great motivation because all students strive to be the most perfected writer in their groups. As they examine each others' papers, I carefully supervise problems of uncertainty in

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[2]Bruce, Joyce and Marsha Weil, Models in Teaching (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1972), pp. 123-136.

[3]Charles A. Hockett, A Course in Modern Linguistics (New York: The Macmillian Company, 1958), pp. 157-165; 253-267.

each group, give individual praise for perfection or for their degree of accomplishment and later select features that are still occurring to re-teach and analyze for clarity in understanding. This procedure continues at least twice weekly until all students have moved individually from point A to point B (a scale of progress arbitrarily from D to C or from C to B).

Now for problems in structure, the use of sentence combining methods have proven most effective. This method has a variety of approaches for whatever is to be taught. For sentence fragments, the use of clauses and phrases for expansion and an understanding and use of adjectives are both used to perfect this problem. The most important asset of this approach is that one can be as innovative as his creativity allows. Lets take a look!!

Sentence Combining

Problem:

The ducks, the chickens, the turkeys, the pigs and the cows have all become negative modernistic concerns on most American farms.

The ducks ate all the bugs. (that)
The bugs were crawling.
The chickens laid the eggs. (that)
The eggs were huge.
The eggs were yellow.
The eggs were country-fresh.
The turkeys beautified the farm yard. (that)
The turkeys were big.
The turkeys were proud.
The farm yard was ugly.
The farm yard was sprawling.
The pigs gave meat for the farmer to eat. (that)
The pigs were fat.
The cows gave milk to drink. (that)
The milk was creamy.
The milk was rich.

Problem:

My parents bought my niece a dog.
My parents are loving.
My parents are thoughtful.
My niece is sweet
My niece is two years old. (Try two-year-old)
The dog is pretty.
The dog is registered.
The dog is pedigreed.
The dog is Cocker Spaniel.
The dog is too young to stay outside. (that)

Problem:

The boys vandalized SOMETHING.
The boys are big.
The boys are husky.
The boys are mischievous.
The boys vandalized the attic of the house.
The attic was dark.
The attic was dreary
The attic was musty.
The house was desolate.
The house was haunted.
The house was old-fashioned.
The house had been deserted for three years. (which)

Problem: Comparison

The old man was in a rage.
His eyes were like marbles of fire. (Add)
His ears stood up like a German Shepard's. (Add)
His tongue was as dry as powder. (Add)
His lips were as tight as a drum. (Add)

Problem: Infinitive

The entire family enjoyed the Wedding Anniversary of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Brown.
Some came to see the beautiful decoration. (Add)
Some came to hear the Anniversary speech. (Add)
Some came to meet old friends. (Add)
Some came to witness the loveline s and sacredness of the occasion. (Add)
Some came to enjoy the festive celebration that followed. (Add)

Problem: Adjective

The young man looked handsome.
His face was long and thin. (Add)
His hair was bushy and black. (Add)
His eyes were deep and sexy. (Add)
His smile was warm and wanton. (Add)
His body was masculine, strong and seductive. (Add)
His disposition was suave, debonaire and cool. (Add)

These approaches have worked in teaching the dialectically different students and they can work for you by allowing students psychological freedom in usage and by approaching whatever he produced with an openness that gives meaning to his cultural identity and to his cultural experiences.

In all your efforts to provide a variety in structures for the second dialect, you want to function in a way to expand the student's language usage without denigrating his native language and culture. For you must remember The Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis here a bit paraphrased--"one's language is the sum total of how he views the world"--his language is his culture and is a reflection of his life's experiences.

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